

Testimony regarding HB 5037

Submitted By:
Patricia O'Hanlon

Good evening Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Patricia O'Hanlon, and I work at Westville Community Nursery School in New Haven.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the Governor's proposed budget for the Office of Early Childhood.

Early childhood programs in the state of CT **NEED MORE FUNDING!** The amount in the proposed budget is not enough! There is no increase. **We need to make child care and education in this state affordable for families. Families cannot afford the high cost of child care.** The state has not increased their funding for School Readiness part day and school day slots since its inception in 1997. Our program is losing thousands of dollars for each child each year because the amount that the state does pay is not even close to the cost of care for each child.

Also Early Childhood staff do not make comparable wages to those who work in public schools. The state is requiring early childhood teachers to have Bachelor degrees but we need to pay staff to reflect their degrees and experience.

We need universal preschool in this state! CT needs to subsidize programs more!

The governor stated that child care workers were and still are essential workers during the pandemic. But it is not reflected in his proposed budget. **THERE IS NO INCREASE IN FUNDING! There is a crisis in child care in this state!!!** Many programs have closed

their doors. Many are on the brink of closing. **IF there is no child care, families can't work!!!**

Staffing is nearly impossible with many EC staff leaving the field. Teachers are exhausted!!! The pandemic has taken a major toll on EC staff. There is a shortage of child care teachers. We are not babysitters but teachers who provide care and education to our youngest ones. We do not feel valued! The way to show us that we are essential is to add money to the budget.

PLEASE ADD FUNDING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD IN THE BUDGET!

Thank you!

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Westville Community Nursery School - *"Where Children Learn to Play and Play to Learn."*